DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 536 SP 017 157

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TITLE Design for a Comprehensive Program of Training for Administrative, Teaching, and Support Personnel in a Local School System.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 22p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Delivery Systems: *Educational Needs: *Educational Objectives: Elementary Secondary Education: Financial Support: Inservice Teacher Education: Management Development: Paraprofessional School Personnel: *Program Design: *Program Evaluation: School Districts: *Staff Development: Teacher Certification
IDENTIFIERS Montgomery County Public Schools MD

ABSTRACT

This overview paper describes a comprehensive training program for three levels of personnel in Montgomery County, Maryland public schools. The three levels include teachers, administrators and supervisory personnel, and supporting services employees. This staff development program is unique in its comprehensive scope, its career-long professional development, the degree of participant involvement in design and delivery, and the funding support negotiated with bargaining agents. The program has five dimensions: conceptual, legal-economic, design process, delivery system, and evaluation. The conceptual dimension involves training as it is related to employee performance. The legal-economic dimension pertains to negotiated agreements for funding support, approval of inservice course credits, and administrative support. The design process seeks not only to involve staff in designing training but also to motivate the staff to seek training through examination of why one seeks training, inservice recommendations, and previous client involvement. A variety of delivery formats exists so that a systematic training component is available or can be developed for those needs that call for training. Program evaluation can be assessed through client feedback, departmental monitoring, evaluation by experts, and formal evaluation. (CJ)

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Design for a Comprehensive Program of Training for Administrative, Teaching, and Support Personnel in a Local School System

Outline

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Design for a Comprehensive Program of Training for Administrative, Teaching, and Support Personnel for a Local School System

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1978

The purpose of this overview paper is to describe a comprehensive training program for three levels of personnel in Montgomery County Public Schools. The three levels include teachers, administrators and supervisory personnel, and supporting services employees such as clerical staff, teacher assistants, and maintenance employees. Before we describe the program, some background information about Montgomery County, Maryland may be helpful.

The county is situated to the northwest of Washington, D.C., between the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers. Its character ranges from urban to rural; its 600,000 citizens are generally highly educated and affluent, although there are many blue-collar workers and also some very poor families. Eighty-two percent of the county's population is caucasian; of the 18% minority population, about 10% is black. The median family income ranks in the top three communities nationwide. Montgomery County's school system covers the entire county--about 500 square miles. The 186 elementary, middle, junior, and senior high schools are administered as a single system. The eight-member Board of Education (seven elected and one student representative) determines educational policies for the schools, and the superintendent and staff administer them. About 7,000 professional and 4,700 supporting employees serve approximately 108,000 students, making Montgomery County one of the

nation's 20 largest school districts.

The district is divided into five geographic areas, each with an associate superintendent and various supporting personnel to aid teachers and administrators in carrying out the intructional program. It is the role of the Department of Staff Development within this organization to provide a comprehensive program of in-service training, for all categories of employees that will help to improve their job effectiveness. The department consists of nine employees who administer, conduct, or coordinate the training programs; they are supported by eight secretarial or clerical employees. Together, these 17 people provide over 350 separate training activities annually.

Edefelt and Lawrence point out in Re-Thinking In-service Education[1] that what is missing from most in-service education is a fundamental framework: there is neither a clear concept of purpose nor are there basic commitments by universities or school districts. In this presentation we hope to illustrate how the Montgomery County staff development program is an exception to this view. The program is unique in its comprehensive scope, its emphasis on career-long professional development, the degree of participant involvement in design and delivery, and the funding support negotiated with bargaining agents. The structure is four-dimensional, containing the following elements:

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[1] Roy Edelfelt and Gordon Lawrence, "In-service Education: The State of the Art," in Re-Thinking In-service Education (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975)

(1) The Conceptual Dimension

(2) The Legal-Economic Dimension

(3) A Design Process

(4) A Delivery System (Support System)

The Conceptual Dimension

The training provided for all employees fits into the school system programs of performance eveluation. Montgomery County Public Schools has, like any organization, written expectations for the people in each job category: administrators, supervisors, teachers, secretaries, maintenance employees, audio-visual technicians. In-service programs are designed to relate to those expectations. Training in a number of areas: curriculum implementation, communication skills, supervisory skills, teaching competence, plant equipment operation--is provided to meet both organizational priorities and the individual's own training requirements. A system of observation and supervision supports the evaluation process and provides needs assessment data for designing training as well as providing each employee's performance rating. The relationship of these elements can be represented in a cyclical model:

SELECTION

TRAINING ORIENTATION

EVALUATION OBSERVATION

SUPERVISION

Such a process does not eliminate selection and orientation as the employee becomes familiar with the job; however, since such a large organization has opportunities for advancement, training and performance frequently lead to promotion. Thus, ideally, the entire cycle is repeated within the employee's career in the organization. While this concept can be characterized as job-related and, at times, job embedded, for many employees there are career/-credentialing and personal development features, as well. For supporting services employees, courses such as air conditioning, plumbing, or shorthand that meet the requirements for promotion are offered after hours; a career development seminar helps them to clarify and analyze personal career objectives; and programs of released time and tuition reimbursement for college, trade or business school courses contribute to the employee's as well as the organization's objectives. For teachers, state accreditation of locally developed credit courses not only contributes to certificate renewal and salary advancement; state approval of a planned in-service program can also lead to attainment of the master's equivalent and the Advanced Professional Certificate, required of all teachers within ten years of employment in the state of Maryland. Through the leadership training program, teachers may prepare for a career in school administration; and individualized training is available to administrators who are changing their career focus.

The Legal-Economic Dimension

For all three categories of employees, negotiated agreements between the Board of Education and the two employee bargaining agents give the philosophical basis for in-service training, as well as two additional, and necessary

supports. First, both negotiated agreements delineate minimum funding standards; second, the agreement for certificated employees provides that credits for in-service courses shall be applicable, as is graduate credit, for movement from one salary lane to another; placement on two levels beyond the entry-level bachelor's degree is possible with in-service credit. By virtue of binding agreements, funding is assured in the administrative training program for conferences, seminars, skill modules, and individualized training options; for conference expenses; and for training materials. In the teacher training program, the agreement requires budgeting for non-credit training, all credit courses, and specifically the teacher competency program; for instructor development; for training materials; and for consultants, materials, and equipment for approved local school staff development projects. The Agreement with the supporting services bargaining agent states the minimum amount to be budgeted for in-service instruction, training materials, and tuition reimbursement.

A second level of legal recognition of the training for certificated staff comes from the state department of education. The state accredits approximately 250 locally developed in-service courses, which can be used for certificate renewal. Further, a 1975 bylaw of the State Board of Education permits teachers to attain the Advanced Professional Certificate by means of a planned in-service program. Montgomery County's program developed for this purpose was approved in 1976; to date, there are approximately 250 participants who are working toward that objective. And, finally, within the school administration, evidence of support for training is clear in a number of policies supporting major school system priorities. The teacher evaluation system, the grading and reporting policy, new curriculum implementatiion

and Black Action Steps are all recent priority thrusts of the organization which have defined staff training as one of the required supports for implementation.

III. The Design Process

Staff Development's role in designing training is to make it clear to clients that the normal state of the profession is growth. The departmental function is not only to provide training; it also motivates clients to seek training. Clients, whether they be business managers, principals, secretaries, or teachers, need to reassess themselves and the needs and issues of their staff. The Department of Staff Development conducts a needs assessment and receives requests from every organizational level of the system. The major task of the department is to react and respond to all requests. Another function is the department's proactive role in offering training.

Typology of why one pursues training

Job Embedded

The performance criteria of the employee's job description are the foundation for determining appropriate in-service needs. The employees or clients benefit by being in a position to request training to assist them in analyzing their own skills and to improve their competencies. The client's immediate supervisor, who confers and evaluates job performance, is in the best position to recommend and follow up on training. When the evaluation process is appropriately linked to staff development training, there is an investment in programs to update or improve in pertinent areas rather than a

random selection of conferences here and there to attend with no stated purpose.

General Professional

The design structure also provides the "good" employees (teachers, principal, computer operators) the opportunity they deserve for developing themselves more fully as people and as professionals. Employees often volunteer for in-service training. They may have positive evaluations and no specific training needs; however, they may seek course work for their own professional development, i.e., training in interpersonal skills, knowledge, and job performance skills. Teachers, teacher specialists, resource teachers, and other instructional resource personnel may select training in distinct teaching functions.

Career/Credential

Professional employees may enroll in credit courses to improve their skills and knowledge and to earn increments on the salary scale. Supporting services employees may enroll in the credit courses; should they later move to a teaching position, the credit is retroactive.

One proactive example is the credential program for teachers, the Planned In-Service Program. This program is cooperatively planned by the teacher, principal, other resource personnel, and a representative of the Department of Staff Development. The program includes a minimum of thirty in-service credits enabling teachers to improve their ability to deliver instructional services. Successful completion of a planned program can result in placement on the master's equivalent salary schedule and, as approved by the

state superintendent of schools, in the issuance of an Advanced Professional Certificate.

Systemwide or local priorities

The staff in the Department of Staff Development spend at least half of their time, if not more, in developing non-credit training to support local schools, areas, the superintendent and Board of Education's systemwide priorities.

Examples of recent programs and personnel needing in-service support are staffs changing from junior highs to middle schools; local school staffs implementing instructional systems in mathematics and reading-language arts, programs aimed to improve minority relations, and programs dealing with continuum education including gifted and talented and mainstreamed students.

C. In-service recommendations

All departments or areas of the school system can submit requests for in-service courses. A systematic process is utilized in order to coordinate efforts and maintain control over offerings. The initial request may be initiated at any level of the organization, and it is processed through the area office to the appropriate central office coordinator of the Department of Instructional Planning and Development and, then, on to the Department of Staff Development. This channeling prevents unnecessary overlap in program development and provides a quality check on the appropriateness of the in-service for the designated audience. Curriculum specialists work closely with The Department of Staff Development coordinators in implementing criteria

used in evaluating course proposals. The following questions with designated criteria are considered in determining the passage of proposals: (1) Does the training relate to the audience's job performance standards or system-wide priorities? (2) Is the program unique, unlike something previously developed? (3) Could the training be better provided in another way? (4) Is it a creditable activity? (5) Is the credit dimension realistic? (6) Is the design of good quality and are the essential design components adequately described?

D. Client involvement in defining the situation and goals

At this beginning stage in the design process, it is extremely important for the in-service coordinator to investigate the rationale for the training proposal. Will training provide the best method in meeting the described needs? Is the training a creditable activity intended to increase and integrate employees' knowledge, educational processes, and skills? Or, is the purpose of the training better achieved in another course or training format, or in another way? In working through this investigation the coordinator will involve the clients, the leader of the clients, the Department of Staff Development, and other appropriate personnel in reaching a decision. Some training proposals are denied approval at this point.

Once it seems reasonable that training will serve an important function, a process for determining clients' specific needs is implemented.

D. Client involvement in assessing needs

Since most of the clients work in schools, it is logical that the determination of training needs usually originates at the local level. The support

from the Department of Staff Development comes in assisting clients in this assessment process. The staff encourage strong client involvement--not mere approval and passive participation.

Several examples of the kinds of support are presented for clarification. In preparing elementary and junior high teachers to change over to middle school instruction, the department provided a series of informational meetings on several topics. At one of the information meetings, participants completed a needs assessment instrument. They were asked to rank order the areas where they would desire training and to submit other requests which didn't appear on the list. Based upon this feedback gathered from a group of teachers aspiring to become middle school teachers, the Department of Staff Development was able to develop training in several key areas and to link present programs to those topical areas receiving high rankings. A subsequent information meeting based on the needs assessment results was presented to link available training to highly-ranked topics. In-service trainers were present with training objectives and materials to respond to questions from participants. Participants received the summary rankings along with a timeline of what particular topics would be available and when. Certain areas could not be included for various reasons and participants were given that information and the rationale. In summary, our function was to motivate teachers to enroll in training fitted to their needs, to inform them of where and when it would be offered, and to let them converse with instructional leaders.

Another example of assessing client needs is the issuance of the STEP LETTER, a bulletin frequently directed to supporting services staff. For

several years the STEP LETTER has utilized this communication vehicle as one means of identifying training needs of supporting services staff. The survey usually includes some or all of the following questions.

- What types of in-service training do you believe are needed for employees in your position?
- What should be included in the course (content)?
- Are you aware of other institutions or organizations that provide this training?
- When is the best time during the workday for the training?

Responses to these questions form the basis for developing training programs.

Client involvement in in-service design and development

Once it has been verified that a definite need exists, the actual process for designing and developing in-service training can commence. Usually a representation of clients meet with training experts, an appropriate supervisor, and the in-service coordinator to develop the training components. The sequence and development structure of the process often varies; however, the end product contains the same design components. The in-service design components are (1) purposes and assumptions of the training (2) a major theme or concept, and a rationale for the training (3) participant objectives, (4) instructor objectives, (5) assessment measures, (6) assignments, including practical application back on the job, (7) participant resources including handouts for each meeting, (8) suggested instructional practices and resources, and (9) an annotated bibliography.

The development of the components and the preparation of trainers in the teacher education program can occur simultaneously. More often, the first step in the teacher-training programs is to identify potential in-service instructors from the client group. They, in turn, work with the staff development coordinator and others to develop the components. Frequently, this part of the development work may take as much as a year if special groundwork needs to be done with the teacher group. The potential instructors keep the course realistic, for they constantly test the feasibility of applying theoretical knowledge in classrooms.

When the situation warrants, an expert from a local university may be selected to assist in the development of content or to offer a course to a group of trainers or both. For example, prior to meeting a need identified by staff in several new middle schools, a group of potential trainers participated in a three-credit hour graduate course in adolescent psychology offered through George Washington University. The final selection of trainers was based on their participation in this course, in other staff development activities and upon recommmendations from immediate supervisors.

In the case of administrative and supporting services training, an expert may be hired as a consultant to work with the staff development coordinator and selected clients in designing or verifying the in-service components. The same expert may then provide the training.

If it is anticipated that subsequent sessions of this same training will be offered, the initial training is considered a pilot program. Clients involved in the pilot stage are instrumental in providing feedback regarding

the usefulness of the objectives. When feasible, immediate supervisors are asked for their observation of any differences in the employees' work assignments.

IV. Delivery System

A variety of delivery formats exists so that a systematic training component is available or is developed for those needs which have been investigated and truly call for training as a legitimate response. Options are available to clients in selecting how and where they will receive the in-service, particularly when the training occurs on their own time. The attached table illustrates the mode of training for different client groups. The modes are listed in order of most to least usage. Teachers more frequently enroll in credit courses on their own time. Supporting service and administrative personnel more frequently enroll in training during their workday.

In attempting to meet training needs of the increasing percentage of teachers who do not need further credit for salary advancement, the system is placing an increased emphasis upon other modes of training, i.e., non-credit institutes and modules for professional development. The system utilizes released time from the regular duty day as one format for providing training; another is the use of stipends payable to clients receiving training, particularly during the summer months. Both of these formats are costly both in dollars and instructional time. The administration limits the use of these formats for high-priority, system needs.

Other modes available are mini courses using self-instructional materials, and short-term awareness level training sessions provided for groups of

clients with similar needs or for local staffs. Group skill development modules planned for one, two, or five days are provided for system priorities for identified schools or individuals. Collaborative projects with institutions of higher education are provided for all levels of clients. Administrative and supervisory personnel have a choice of skill modules or informational conferences and seminars.

Variety is also available in site and length of in-service. The in-service training occurs throughout the 500 square miles at local school sites, areas offices, the Staff Development Training Center, or at nearby colleges and county government centers. The locations most frequently utilized and the approximate length of the training for the three client groups are also summarized in the table attached.

V. Evaluation

No amount of training will bring about improvement unless clients participating in the training and administrators who will be supervising them on the job are willing to move from "business as usual" attitudes and grow into new roles; all professionals must be willing to initiate and direct change instead of remaining maintenance personnel.

One role of the in-service coordinator is to promote sound principles of data collection and supervision among clients at all levels. The assessment process includes four formats.

A. Participant Evaluation

The first concern in assessing training is to obtain participant feedback about the relevance of the training course to the client's position and about procedures used in instruction. The process of gaining and using participant feedback has been refined as a regularized process by the in-service coordinators of Staff Development who monitor the training. In order to obtain participant feedback, the department regularly gathers clients' perceptions of the value of in-service training. Participant evaluations are collected at least twice a semester for each in-service course, and in some cases, weekly. Each training activity includes some form of participant feedback.

B. Monitoring by staff

Staff perform the function of monitoring, a visit to the training site, on a systematic basis. For example, during a three-credit-hour in-service course the in-service coordinators observe on three different occasions. A conference to discuss the data collected and the coordinator's interpretations is held as soon as possible following each visit.

C. Monitoring by experts in the field

A third format in assessment is to solicit opinions from experts in the field regarding appropriateness of the training program.

In 1974, a team of professionals having different perspectives on teacher education was asked to review the entire Teacher Competency in-service course series for logical consistency, interrelationship,

and quality of design, and to make suggestions for improvement. Dr. James Cooper (University of Houston), Dr. Martha Rashid (George Washington University) and Dr. Robert Soar (University of Florida) performed that review both independently and as a team. Again, in 1976, as part of the evaluation of the Planned In-service Program, representatives of the Maryland State Department of Education observed for several days and reported on the work of the personnel in the program.

D. Formal Evaluation

Our evaluative efforts are centered on what we consider the basic goal of the training programs; that is, to measure a client's growth from the beginning to the end of a particular training program; for example, to ascertain the degree to which a given teacher training course affects a teacher's behavior at the conclusion of the in-service program. This type of evaluation is more common to the teacher training program than to others.

An outside agency was contracted to evaluate one of the Teacher Competency Courses, TC-10, "Supervisory Skills." The purpose of the study was to determine the skill level participants acquired from entry to exit of the course. Given positive results at the exit level, a follow-up contract would evaluate retention of skills five months after the course was completed. The exit-level findings were

- subjects in this TC-10 study significantly improved in general conferencing techniques from entry time to exit time. The differences found were significant at the .001 level;

- twenty-two of twenty-seven participants showed growth from entry to exit in specific conference models; and
- participants were able to conduct conferences using styles and techniques consistent with the models taught in the class.

A five month follow-up study indicated that participants had maintained and, in some cases, improved their conference skills. All subjects scored higher on the follow-up conference than on the entry, and twelve of the eighteen who participated scored higher on the follow-up conference than the exit. The researchers drew two conclusions.

1. The findings clearly support the conclusion that follow-up conferences were of a quality at least as high as, if not higher than, the exit conferences. Participants not only grow in their conferencing ability from the TC-10 course (as supported by the findings of the first report) but clearly maintain and probably improve that ability over time.
2. While there is a maintenance or increase in general conference skills after the conclusion of the TC-10 course, it appears that after the passage of time conferences do not zero in quite as clearly on the techniques of the specific model selected.

   This is not a surprising finding. While the major principles are retained and refined over time, the differentiations among the techniques specific to each model become slightly less emphasized.

In another teacher training course on writing objectives and assessment measures, the evaluators found teachers performed significantly higher on two variables--number of objectives written and the behavioral specificity of the objectives--than they did before the course.

It is the goal of the Department of Staff Development consistently to approach assessment on several different levels--participant feedback, coordinator monitoring, experts in the field, and formal evaluation through outside agencies. While such data is useful in indicating the worth of training, the data obtained from all levels are also necessary in revising and updating the training programs.